

The Church and Cultural Life in Sorbian Lusatia after 1945

(with the View to the Czech-Sorbian Relations)

Summary

The aim of this article is to take a closer look at the post-war development of Czech-Sorbian relations. Emphasis is placed upon the attitudes of the former GDR toward the Sorbian minority and above all toward the Sorbian National Movement immediately following the Second World War, which is tied to the attempts to make Lusatia a part of the Czechoslovak state. Particular attention is devoted to the Sorbs' relationship to the church and school and the resulting activities of the Friends of Lusatia Society (FLS) and to the Lusatian Seminary in Czechoslovakia, later the Lusatian House in Prague.

One breakthrough in this endeavor was, for example, the acquisition of new information on the relationship of Domowina to the FLS. Between the 1940s and 1950s, it is surprising that Domowina did not advocate a positive attitude toward FLS. This fact has not yet been documented in any of the literature on the Sorbs.

The addition of new information from archival materials and specialized literature on the topic in question was also important. An entire series of studies has been devoted to the Sorbian question, both on the Czech and the German side, but it is necessary to complete several more archival research projects and make several interviews with native Sorbian speakers as well as with Sorabists from our country.

Delimitation of the problem and solutions to its parts in the historical context of Czech-German relations was one of the further aims of this study. Today, the Czechs are no longer such a significant cultural and societal model as in previous times, though after the revolution in 1989 it was still emphasized that the Sorbs, as a Slavic nation, could take on the role of mediator between Germany and its neighbors, Poland and the Czech Republic. The problem of orienting to the new conditions, their small number and the continuing individualization of society, which not even the Sorbs could avoid, show that building upon the fruitful era of a half century ago is rather unlikely. In the Czech Republic, the administration of Miloš Zeman assumed a positive stance toward the Sorbs. In a time of general disagreement of both the Czech and Sorbian public with the closing of a type A middle school in Crosswitz, this administration provided financial support to the Sorbian Domowina in September 2001. At the same time, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs has assumed a positive relationship to the Sorbian minority in Germany and has the same relationship to it as to the Czechs living

there. In this context, in the school year 2004/5, it sent Czech language teacher Jana Stillerová to the Sorbian high school in Bautzen. However, the attitude of the Ministry of Education, or the Center for the Study of Higher Education, is different. The center, which is now located in the building of the former Lusatian Seminary, later the Lusatian House, where FLS had its headquarters, has thus far enabled neither FLS' return to these quarters nor the return of the Hórník Library with its special collections.

Current Czech-Sorbian relations are above all cultural ones, in which folklore, which was supported the most by the former East German regime, plays a significant role. This was a matter of "special folklore in the framework of the German nation". It is up to the individual Sorbs of Lusatia to utilize stimuli from the rich cultural life of the Czechs for their own cultural production, and thus offer an alternative to German-Sorbian symbiosis.